A number of factors determine the fates of individual characters during battlefield scenes in the *Iliad*. In terms of sheer body count, most of those that perish in battle seem to have been created simply in order for others to kill them.\(^1\) Typical of this group is the Trojan Cleoboulus, who receives neither dying words nor patronymic nor homeland, and appears only long enough to fall to Oileian Ajax (16.330–334). As for the more developed characters, life or death in battle is, to begin with, a function of the plot: major heroes by definition survive through most or all of the narrative, and lesser ones at least until they have performed their subsidiary roles. Hector, for instance, must remain alive until the dramatic climax of the plot in Book 22, while the Trojan ally Pandarus is killed soon after he performs the necessary function of restarting the war following the duel between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3 (4.85–222, 5.243–296).

The fates of at least some of these more developed characters are also influenced by the fact that they were already or were becoming established in other contexts at the time when the *Iliad* was taking shape. Odysseus, to take an obvious example, cannot die in the *Iliad* because he was a widely recognized figure best known for a successful return from Troy, as is attested in the Homeric *Odyssey* and non-Homeric poetry, artistic representations, cult activity on his native Ithaca, and so on. Inclusion of heroes who like Odysseus are linked to other, in most cases regional, contexts helped poems like the *Iliad* appeal to audiences that came from across the Hellenic world to attend festivals such as the Panathenaea and Olympic games.

Since regional, or “epichoric,” myths could vary a great deal – as is the case for instance with the contradictory accounts of Odysseus’ life after his homecoming – the inclusion of such heroes came at a certain cost. On the one hand, audiences would at times be required to set aside other accounts \(^1\) For statistics on deaths in the *Iliad* see Beye 1964, 358, 366–367; Armstrong 1969; Whallon 1979, 20–21.
of the Trojan War with which they were familiar in order to appreciate a
synthetic narrative that could appeal to all or most. Thus, for example, be-
cause the Panhellenic Odyssey rejects the notion of an unfaithful Penelope,
it would have presented Arcadians with a version of Odysseus’ story that
was incompatible with their epichoric tradition about a sacred site on the
road from Mantineia to Orchomenos where she was said to have been bu-
rried after being banished from Ithaca by Odysseus for her dalliances with
the suitors.2 Egbert Bakker, borrowing a phrase from Michel Foucault, has
drawn attention to the need to limit the “proliferation of meanings” that
became apparent as Panhellenic performance contexts emerged:

Proliferation of meaning is precisely what occurred in the Greek world of the
archaic age, when increased inter-city contacts in a more global, panhellenic
environment led to a freer exchange of oral traditions. The shortcomings of
the local traditions became apparent, and the system of constraint that had
been in place hitherto, the Muse inspiring the local bard, was incapable of re-
solving their mutual conflicts.3

On the other hand, as Gregory Nagy has argued, the Panhellenization of
epic narratives also placed constraints on composer-performers, since the
process was characterized by

an evolving fixity in patterns of performance lead[ing] to a correspondingly
evolving fixity in patterns of composition, given that performance and com-
position—or, better, recomposition—are aspects of the same process in this
medium.4

Thus, while poems like the Iliad subordinated some heroes to a Panhel-
lenic identity that resolved conflicts among local traditions, many of these
characters were at the same time coming to assume a fixed identity that
transcended, not only epichoric myths, but also any given Panhellenic
narrative, including the Iliad itself.5 A Panhellenic narrative might deny
the legitimacy of some local traditions, such as that of the unfaithful Pene-
lope, but it was also constrained by a growing body of myths that were
attaining Panhellenic status in other contexts. Under such conditions,

4 Nagy 1996, 93.
5 In the words of Foley 1987, 93, “The actions and values associated with a hero ac-
cumulate to that hero by virtue of his enacted and re-enacted mythic history; he is
both complete in any one manifestation and forever becoming complete, because
his identity is inscribed in the dynamic of story which is known but can never end”.
audiences, and composer-performers as well, would over time become increasingly sensitive to the consequences of the deaths of certain characters. The far-reaching consequences of an untimely Iliadic death for Odysseus, to return to the example, would be such as to marginalize the *Iliad* itself by thrusting its account of the Trojan War far out of the Panhellenic mainstream.

Who lives and who dies in an Iliadic battle, then, is determined in part by the need for deaths in a war story, in part by the logic of the plot, and in part by the contours of a synthetic view of the Trojan War that became the accepted framework, not only for the *Iliad*, but for other Panhellenic and would-be Panhellenic narratives, including the *Odyssey*, Hesiodic epics, *Homeric Hymns*, and the poems referred to as the Epic Cycle. It was the unique – or at least uniquely accepted – claim of the canonical Homeric epics to articulate, not the entire story of the Trojan War – for this was impossible given the state of information technology (*Iliad* 2.488–490 and 12.176) – but rather what Ahuvia Kahane has described as “transcendental knowledge” of this larger story, the kind of understanding that is represented in myth as the possession of only the Muses and their traditionally blind vessel.6

Participation in the Panhellenic register of the Greek epic tradition thus demanded access to transcendental knowledge that could lend coherence to the larger and highly convoluted story of the Trojan War. Simply put, a character that plays a significant role in the story of the Trojan War after the *Iliad* cannot be killed, while a character that dies earlier in the story is precluded from the main narrative of the *Iliad*. Neither Menelaus nor Paris, for instance, can be allowed to win the duel to the death that is staged in order to settle their dispute in Book 3, both because the war must go on and because each plays a significant role in events after the end of the *Iliad*. Conversely, Protesilaus, the first Greek to die in the war, can appear only in flashbacks (e.g., 2.698–709) owing to the *Iliad’s in medias res* narrative structure.

Given the large number of characters from this transcendent, synthetic Trojan War narrative that appear in the *Iliad*, there would seem to be a place for mechanisms that could alert composer-performers and their audiences to the larger context that attaches to many of the heroes and in part guides their fates. One such mechanism, I propose, is the rescue of a

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6 Kahane 2005, 38–40; cf. 122 on the “fantasy of completeness” represented by the Muses.
fighting hero by a god. Such a divine rescue scene, by my interpretation, is more than a special effect to be deployed at the whim of ancient poets. Rather, this dramatic way of preserving a character represents a positive assertion that the character will not simply survive a battle, but will play a significant role in later events. Analysis of the relevant scenes will demonstrate that the heroes who are rescued by a god almost without exception appear either later in the *Iliad*, or, more often, in scenes that take place after the narrative of the *Iliad* concludes.

The well-known intercession of Poseidon on behalf of Aeneas in *Iliad* 20 will serve as a paradigmatic example of divine rescue. Achilles is on the point of killing the Trojan hero (290) when the god, after discussion with his fellow Olympians, intervenes on the battlefield “in order that the family of Dardanus not be destroyed” (302–308). Poseidon first pours mist over Achilles to confuse him (321–322), then spirits Aeneas away to safety and leaves him with the promise that he will be impervious to Greek attack once Achilles has died (337–339). Here the *Iliad* bows to what Poseidon calls “destiny” (µόριµον, 302), despite the fact that killing Aeneas would glorify Achilles and set the stage for his encounter with Hector, and could create a dramatically and aesthetically satisfying sequence, with the Greek champion returning to kill the powerful Trojan who previously eluded both himself (187–194) and his near double Diomedes (5.297–346). Aeneas’ larger role in the synthetic Trojan War narrative forestalls this dramatic possibility, however, as Poseidon’s rescue of him, which is the more remarkable because the god is elsewhere a vigorous partisan of the Greeks, makes emphatically clear.

Ancient audiences that came to performances of the *Iliad* already acquainted with Aeneas’ story would, in the course of experiencing the scene of his rescue, perceive first a potential conflict with established tradition, followed by the satisfaction of seeing their assumptions about the trajectory of the scene confirmed: Achilles can’t kill Aeneas, can he? Of course not. Any audience members unaware of Aeneas’ larger identity, on the other hand, would be presented with a memorable assertion of his significance: a major god descends from the heavens in order to insist that

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7 For the term “divine rescue” and its deployment as a typical theme see Fenik 1968, 34–47; more recent discussion in Kirk 1990, 54 on *Il*. 5.9–26.
8 See Marks 2008, 6, 53, 129 and 135 for the relationships among “fate,” the epic gods, and the epic tradition.
9 On Poseidon’s role as guarantor of fate, see also Nagy 1979, 268–269; 1990a, 28. Louden 2006, 24, 238–239 draws attention to how this rescue elevates Aeneas’ status and imparts an apocalyptic character to the poem.
Aeneas’ post-Iliadic fate protects him from even the most powerful warrior at Troy and from any who may arrive in the post-Iliadic future.

Characters on the battlefield can be preserved in other ways, but rescue by a god is a more dramatic and rare, and therefore more memorable, device than rescue by a comrade, chance, or a character’s own resources. It is my argument that association with a god in this fashion marks a hero as the shared property of the synthetic account of the Trojan War to which Panhellenic and would-be Panhellenic accounts came to conform. From this perspective, a divine rescue draws attention to what John Foley has called “traditional referentiality,” the “idiomatic meaning” that is “attached to phrases, verses, scenes and whole story-patterns” in a traditional oral narrative.10 Aid from a god on the battlefield is one indication that the referentiality of the beneficiary transcends the given scene and belongs to the larger tradition.

In this respect I further suggest that Iliadic divine rescue scenes bear comparison to the hyperlinks in an electronic text that mark a word or phrase as possessing context relevant to the document at hand. Hyperlinks also constitute a mechanism that alerts audiences – in this case, modern readers – to the larger context that attaches to certain content. Like a hyperlink, association with a god in a divine rescue attaches a broader meaning to an Iliadic hero, in effect activating traditional referentiality that is latent in the hero’s identity. The idiomatic meaning of the god – usually as patron, but sometimes as antagonist or emissary of another – combines with that of the hero – as a survivor of the scene, of the Iliad, of the war – to establish a multidirectional node that anchors composer-performers and audiences to the broader synthetic narrative of the Trojan War that resembles in effect a virtual database of heroic possibilities and impossibilities.

Christos Tsagalis has recently approached Homeric similes from this perspective, arguing that

... similes’ experiential loads ... make available to the audience a hypertextual world of multiple image-mappings. In fact, the similes are equivalent to HTML, a “Hyper Text Markup Language”, employing effective formats, which (re)activate a sequence of images on a level distinct from the main narrative” [emphases in original].11

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10 Foley 2005, 249.
Similarly, I propose, divine rescue “(re)activates” a hero’s connections to other Trojan War narratives, inviting the audience to regard the hero from a perspective that transcends the moment and recognizes the experiential load the hero carries for the synthetic hyper-narrative. This synthetic account of the Trojan War, linked as it is to multiple narratives, thus becomes something akin to the “borderless text” described by George Landow:

> Linking changes the experience of text and authorship by rendering the borders of all text permeable: by reifying allusions, echoes, references, and so on, linking (1) makes them material, (2) draws individual texts experientially closer together.12

In like manner as a simile or a hyperlink draws the audience into the interpretation of the narrative, so a divine rescue invites audiences to look beyond the scene in which it occurs for links to events before and after. Individual texts – in this case, performances of epic poems – are drawn closer together through the agency of the gods, characters that transcend any given narrative, and indeed the medium of poetry altogether.

During a performance of the *Iliad*, then, the links established by the association of hero and god in a divine rescue scene could help a poet to avoid pitfalls such as prematurely killing of characters, and help an audience to appreciate the significance of these characters. The audience is in the process rewarded for its knowledge of the broader tradition, and is also reminded of the *Iliad*’s own claims to Panhellenic authority within that tradition. Nor should divine rescue be seen as a mere intertextual device, for the “marking up” of a hero in this way can also contribute to the dramatic impact of individual battle scenes in a narrative filled with them. Thus, for instance, the intermittent divine protection that Achilles and Hector receive during their final duel in *Iliad* 22 resonates with the protection that the two have repeatedly received earlier in the poem, and in the process contributes to the pathos of the scene by drawing attention to the fickleness of the gods and to the post-Iliadic fate of Achilles.

Returning to the paradigmatic example, Poseidon during his rescue of Aeneas can be seen to reactivate the context that ancient Greek audiences brought to a performance of a Panhellenic epic. In *Iliad* 20, the magnitude of the drama of the god’s intervention is proportionate to the magnitude of the role that the Trojan hero plays in the synthetic narrative. Aeneas must survive the *Iliad* and the war because he is fated to preserve a remnant of the Trojan people, who, like the returning victorious Greeks, figure

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prominently in myths about the founding of cities and cults throughout the Mediterranean. The most widely used English-language repository of classical hypertexts, the Perseus Protect, offers an instructive comparison. The Perseus *Iliad* links every appearance of the word “Aeneas” with dozens of images and numerous modern reference articles. The site’s own concise “Perseus Encyclopedia” offers the following brief synopses with their own links to ancient sources:

**Aeneas (2):**
- son of Anchises: Paus. 8.12.8
- son of Anchises and Aphrodite: Apollod. 3.12.2
- husband of Creusa: Paus. 10.26.1
- his kine on Ida raided by Achilles: Apollod. E.3.32
- an ally of the Trojans: Apollod. E.3.34
- fights Diomedes: Paus. 5.22.2
- his fight: Paus. 7.19.7
- Aphrodite comes to his help: Apollod. E.4.1
- carries Anchises on his back: Apollod. E.5.21
- leads fugitives from Troy: Paus. 10.17.6
- takes Palladium to Italy: Paus. 2.23.5
- founds two cities in Laconia: Paus. 3.22.11, Paus. 8.12.8
- buries his father Anchises in Arcadia: Paus. 8.12.8
- statue: Paus. 2.21.1
- chest of: Paus. 7.19.7

Tellingly, roughly half of Aeneas’ exploits listed here take place in the mythological time that comes after the end of the *Iliad*. Should the links be further pursued, it quickly becomes clear that the traditions preserved in [Apollodorus] and Pausanias belong to the kind of epichoric register referred to by Bakker and Nagy: they attach to the Trojan hero a proliferation of meanings. Thus Poseidon’s excursus on Aeneas’ destiny in *Iliad* 20 acknowledges the collective force of the many traditions associated with the hero, and at the same time maps out for him a Panhellenic destiny. This destiny is, however, short on specifics – and therefore removed from the tangle of myths of the kind suggested by the Pausanias and [Apollodorus] passages, deeper engagement with which would complicate the *Iliad*’s attempt to maintain a Panhellenic perspective.

As a consequence, a modern hypertext of the *Iliad* is in effect also already encoded in a sort of “divine text mark-up language”. For even though the cultural infrastructure that preserved traditional referentiality during composition-in-performance in ancient Greece, and thereby maintained the coherence of the transcendent Trojan War story, no longer

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exists, the reader of a modern hypertext can nevertheless recreate to some extent the experience of Homeric audiences by accessing Trojan War traditions through links to ancient artistic and literary representations of accounts that parallel, supplement, and at times contradict the Homeric account of the war.

Poseidon’s rescue of Aeneas in *Iliad* 20 includes a particularly full explanation of the motivation for the god’s actions, but more commonly the connection between a divine rescue and its consequences is left for the *Iliad*’s audiences to infer. This is for example the case in a divine rescue described by Nestor, who declares that he would have slain a pair of twin warriors known as the Molione during a long-ago battle, “had not their father, wide-ruling earth-holder, saved them from war and covered them in mist” (11.751–752). As Bryan Hainsworth comments on the passage, “[t]he Molione must escape on this occasion, for tradition assigned their slaying to Heracles; their preservation is explained with a typical theme (a hero is rescued by a god) and a typical detail (they are shrouded in mist)”.

As in the scene with Aeneas, the necessary preservation of these heroes is strongly marked by the intrusion of a god on the battlefield. Hainsworth’s commentary supplies context, the unexpressed link with Heracles, that Homeric audiences would have brought to performances of the *Iliad*, context that is again comparable to that supplied by the links to the Perseus text of the *Iliad*, where the twins are identified as:

**Molionides**

slain by Heracles: Apollod. 2.7.1; Paus. 5.2.1–5; cf. Paus. 8.14.9

See also Eurytus

This divine rescue in Nestor’s embedded narrative serves the same purpose as those in the main narrative. Poseidon saves the Molione because they play a significant role in traditions external to the scene in which Nestor confronts them. Although the *Iliad* does not explain why Nestor cannot kill the Molione, Poseidon’s rescue of them establishes a node that connects the Panhellenic *Iliad* with traditions about the major hero Heracles — and this despite the fact that no definitive, Panhellenic account of that hero ever emerged in ancient Greece. Put another way, the divine rescue here alludes to the proprietary hold that the Heracles tradition, even without a single, recognized voice, exerted over the Molione, even in the Panhellenic context of the *Iliad*.

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14 Hainsworth 1993, 305 on *Il.* 11.752. The deaths of the Molione are referred to in such epichoric contexts as Pindar’s *Olympian* 10.25–34.
Another divine rescue scene carried out by Poseidon, that of Nestor’s son Antilochus, finds the god again harmonizing the narrative with events external to the *Iliad*, and again doing so without the overt declaration of motivation that accompanies his protection of Aeneas. In Book 13, as the Trojans attack the Greek ships, “Poseidon the earth-holder protected the son of Nestor even amid the many missiles” (554–555), at one point even turning aside a hostile spear (560–565). The rescue of Antilochus in Book 13 preserves this hero for future appearances in the *Iliad* in which he helps protect the Greek ships (17.378–383), performs the delicate task of informing Achilles about the death of Patroclus (17.653–18.33), and competes in the chariot and foot races during Patroclus’ funeral games (23.301, 755). At the same time, Poseidon’s intervention preserves a hero who, like Aeneas, plays a significant role in the post-*Iliadic* story of Troy. Antilochus’ later death in battle, which is referred to repeatedly in the *Odyssey* (3.112, 4.187–188; cf. 24.78), was central to the *Aethiopis* (Proclus pp. 68–69 Bernabé), a lost epic that told the story of the Trojan war from roughly the point where the *Iliad* ends through the death of Achilles and its aftermath. In the *Aethiopis*, Antilochus is killed by the Aethiopian hero Memnon (cf. *Odyssey* 4.188), who in turn becomes the last major warrior killed by Achilles before he is himself killed by Paris.15

Poseidon, then, protects Antilochus in *Iliad* 13 in part because this hero plays a significant role later in the *Iliad*, and in part because of his role in the larger story of Troy’s fall. The hermeneutic of hypertext is useful in distinguishing the former exigency from the latter: Antilochus’ rescue provides both “internal” links to his later appearances in the *Iliad* itself and “external” links to his roles outside the *Iliad* in other epics such as the *Aethiopis* and *Odyssey*.16 Navigation between these frames of reference relies again on the shared, transcendent knowledge possessed by performers and their audiences. From the perspective of topology, performers would be able to impose limits on internal paths by controlling the number of nodes, which are simply references to given characters that they establish within their texts. External paths, on the other hand, would anchor as many nodes as a member of the audience could identify based on

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15 Analytic and Neo-Analytic approaches to the *Iliad* have viewed Antilochus as the template for Patroclus in the *Iliad*; for a critique of this interpretation see Burgess 1997. My argument here relies on no such assumptions about the Cyclic epics serving as a source for Homer; rather I suggest that both narratives were constrained by the same pressures that were shaping the overall account of the Trojan War; see further below.

16 On internal and external links, see Björneborn and Ingwersen 2004, 1218–1219.
his or her knowledge of the larger tradition, and the coherence of such paths would depend on their conformance with their transcendent awareness of the Trojan War tradition.

These external links are further strengthened by the fact that almost every Homeric divine rescue scene incorporates, in addition to local factors that motivate a god to aid a hero in battle and that place the hero in peril, a specific relationship between the rescuer and rescued. In the passage just discussed, Poseidon is the father of the Molione and therefore their logical divine protector, just as elsewhere Aphrodite intercedes for her son Aeneas and Thetis for her son Achilles. And while he is not the father of Antilochus, Poseidon is particularly close to his family; thus for example in the *Odyssey* his father Nestor is introduced while performing a spectacular sacrifice to the sea god (3.5–9). In this respect again, the rescues make sense in terms of a web of associations that forges external links between characters and settings and particular traditions, some of which can even be assigned to specific regions, such as Nestor’s Pylos and historical Messenia. In the case of the Molione, since the *Iliad* is unlikely to have created the empty implication that they must be saved from Nestor, Poseidon’s association with them appears, as Hainsworth observes, to have been part of an emerging tradition, readily identified with the Peloponnesian hero Heracles, that is reactivated in the divine rescue scene described by Nestor, whose family enjoys a similarly close relationship with the god.

Seen in this light, Aeneas’ rescue by Poseidon is exceptional, and for this reason the more emphatic – a point to which I shall return. More typical is Aeneas’ rescue from Diomedes by Aphrodite and Apollo, alluded to above. In this scene (5.297–346), the goddess and mother of the hero takes the lead in the rescue and receives the aid of the patron god of the city for whom the hero fights. Aphrodite’s intervention on behalf of Paris, and Apollo’s rescues of Hector before the final showdown with Achilles, are similarly motivated. In the first case, (3.373–382), Aphrodite is continuing her patronage of the Trojan prince, which traces back to the Judgment of Paris (24.28–30): the love goddess saves the famous lover who ruled in her favor and so set in motion events leading to the Trojan War. Her rescue of him ensures that the war will not be settled in the aforementioned duel with Menelaus in Book 3, but also that her favorite will live to kill Achilles in the post-Iliadic portion of the Trojan War. In the case of

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17 For Poseidon’s connection with Pylos, which extends to mention in Linear B tablets recovered from the site, see Burkert 1985, 136. For the gods’ rescue of their favorites again, see Kirk 1990, 54 on *Il.* 5.9–26.
Apollo’s rescues of Hector, Troy’s most powerful divine patron predictably champions its most powerful warrior, preserving him early on amid the aristeia of the Greek hero Teucer (8.309–311 with 301–302), and as discussed in the moments leading up to his death (20.443–454, 22.202–204).

Most other examples of divine rescue in the Iliad can be explained in terms of this intersection between internal and/or external links to other adventures for the rescued character and a special relationship between him and the rescuer. Thus when Apollo saves Poulydamas from a spear-thrust (15.521–522), he in the same act repays the service of a character whose father is his own priest (at least in Virgil: Aeneid 2.318), ensures that the lesser character can continue to serve as a foil for the major character Hector (in particular 18.243–313), and maintains the Iliad’s relationship with the transcendent narrative, for, as the OCD s.v. “Polydamas” observes, this hero’s “death is nowhere recorded and he seems to be thought of as surviving the war”. A special relationship and future significance also explain the more developed rescue by Apollo of Agenor (21.544–605), a son of the Trojan Antenor who is often paired with Aeneas among the few escapees from the Greeks’ destruction of Troy.

The Iliad elsewhere offers reasons why Antenor and at least part of his family might be spared (3.203–207, 7.347–353), and their survival was also for example the subject of a play by Sophocles and of a famous painting by Polygnotus at Delphi. In Iliad 21, then, when Agenor’s life is threatened, Apollo sweeps him away in the typical cloud of mist (597), and proceeds to take on the hero’s form in order to aid the Trojans. In this

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18 See James 1996 for an overview of divine interventions in the Iliad.
19 So also Hainsworth 1993, 325 on II. 12.60, though for him, in contrast with the present analysis, “Pouludamas fulfils most of the criteria for a character of the poet’s invention”.
20 E.g. Livy 1.1; Aeneas is listed together with Antenor’s sons in the Catalog of Ships (II. 2.820–822).
22 Interestingly, Agenor is in the course of the scene compared to a πάρδαλις, leopard or panther (21.573); while this animal appears elsewhere in comparisons (e.g., 13.103, 17.20), it is also specific to the story of the hero’s family, since, according to sources such as Pausanias (again, 10.27.3, citing Polygnotus’ painting), a leopard-skin was placed over their door as a sign to spare those inside when the Greeks sacked the city.
way Agenor survives the *Iliad*; his death, according to the larger tradition, occurs during the sack of Troy (*Ilias Parva* fr. 18 Bernabé). His rescue in the *Iliad* thus foreshadows not only his death, just as divine intercession on Achilles’ behalf points to that hero’s death outside the *Iliad*, but also to the deliverance of his father Antenor.

Apollo’s miraculous healing of Glaucus during the fight around Sarpedon’s body in Book 16 can also be explained in these terms. While the Lycian hero has only sustained an arrow in the arm (12.387–391), and has survived for four books without the god’s aid, the fact that the bleeding has not stopped and that the pain has spread to the shoulder (16.517–519) suggest that Glaucus’ life could be in danger. Apollo’s timely intervention (16.527–531) thus preserves Glaucus so that he may not only help to rescue Sarpedon’s body, in accordance with Zeus’ wishes (16.597 with 450–458), but may also take part in the battle around Achilles’ body after the *Iliad* ends, during which struggle he is killed by Ajax ([Apollodorus] *Epitome* 5.4).23 When Achilles himself faces the rivergod Xanthos, the partisan gods Hera, Athena, Poseidon and Hephaestus unite to preserve their champion, and even make explicit the purpose, or at least the immediate consequences, of their intervention: Poseidon, again giving voice to fate, assures Achilles that he will survive the encounter with the river and will go on to kill Hector (21.284–297). The only case of divine rescue in the *Iliad* that involves an otherwise unknown character, Hephaestus’ saving of Idaeus, a son of one of his priests (5.9–24),24 is immediately explicable only in terms of a special relationship between rescuing god and rescued hero; I shall return to this scene presently.

A special relationship also motivates the only rescues carried out by the chief god Zeus in the *Iliad*, those of Hector and Sarpedon, both of whom must survive long enough for their deaths to play crucial roles in the narrative.25 The latter is of course Zeus’ own son, and the god, after hav-

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23 As Erbse 1986, 207–218 emphasizes, Apollo’s actions and those of other gods who perform rescues remain in accord with the plans of Zeus. Apollo also saves Hector as it were by proxy when the helmet he gives the hero wards off Diomedes’ spear (*Il. 11.349–353*). As Janko 1992, 382 on *Il. 16.508–531* observes, Apollo’s support of Glaucus is also consistent with his status as a heroic ancestor for Ionian aristocrats as attested by Herodotus (1.147).

24 This Idaeus is apparently to be distinguished from the Trojan herald of the same name who is most prominent in the duel in Book 7 (276–416) and in Priam’s return of Hector’s body (24.325, 470).

25 Aeneas credits Zeus with rescuing himself in an episode prior to the main narrative (*Il. 20.89–93*), but the god’s involvement here seems best explained as a generaliz-
ing protected him from lethal blows in two previous battles (5.662; 12.402–403), at last yields him up (16.431–458) to the fate that he has himself already decreed (15.67). As for Hector, Zeus, who later implies a special relationship with him when he remarks on his piety (cf. 22.170–172), protects him from Agamemnon during the onslaught on the Greek ships (11.163), during which scene a balance is struck between the need for a major Trojan to oppose the main Greek commander Agamemnon and the need for Hector to continue playing his role in Zeus’ own plan for the war (cf. 8.473–477).26

It may be observed that goddesses are less active rescuers than gods in the *Iliad*, despite the fact that Hera and Athena at least are in other respects every bit as prominent in the narrative as the more active male rescuers, Apollo and Poseidon. Athena the battle goddess is unsurprisingly the most conspicuous in this capacity: she for instance champions Diomedes’ *aristeia* generally (5.1–8, 793–834), during which scene that parallels Apollo’s aid to Glauceus in *Book 16*, helps him to recover from an arrow shot (5.95–143), though one that does not appear particularly serious (106), despite the boasts of the author of the wound (103–104, 119–120).

In keeping with the now familiar pattern, Diomedes both enjoys an established relationship with Athena (cf. 23.388–390) that, as with Nestor’s family, is apparently hereditary (4.390), and he is also a major character in post-Iliadic events including the capture of the Trojan Palladion (*Ilias Parva* p. 75 Bernabé), as well as being an undisputed survivor of the Trojan War (*Odyssey* 3.180–182). Athena’s one other battlefield rescue occurs in *Book 11*, where she intervenes in order to ensure that Odysseus survives the spear that places him among the Greeks who are wounded in the Trojan advance to the ships (438–439). Because Athena’s appearance here takes place in defiance of the ban on divine intervention that Zeus decrees in

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26 As Hainsworth 1993, 243 on *Il.* 11.163 puts it, “[i]t is … necessary to insert the note (163–164) that Hector was not present to ‘notice’ Agamemnon’s rampage because Zeus (whose inscrutable will explains everything) has removed him from the battle”. Zeus earlier sends Iris to warn Hector to keep clear of Agamemnon (11.186–194).
Book 8 (7–37), and enforces specifically upon her and Hera (438–483), critics have classified it as façon de parler. Alternatively, however, the exceptional nature of Athena’s rescue of Odysseus, both in terms of Zeus’ ban and her gender, can also serve to highlight a link to the larger Odysseus-tradition. That is, any wound serious enough to drive Odysseus from the battlefield is potentially life-threatening, so that the Iliad’s deployment of Athena in Book 11 in effect acknowledges the independence of Odysseus from Iliadic tradition, both literally by turning aside the spear that strikes him, and figuratively as a transparent allusion to the close relationship with Athena that defines Odysseus in the Odyssey and elsewhere in the story of the Trojan War. Athena’s other intercessions are less significant. She renders harmless the arrow that grazes Menelaus and restarts the war after his duel with Paris (4.127–132), but she herself is responsible for the launching of the arrow in the first place (86–104). And though Athena later helps Achilles defeat Hector, at one point even retrieving his spear for him (22.273–277), she doesn’t actually save him, and acts only after receiving prior approval from Zeus (177–185). Athena is also prompted by Zeus to perform a rescue in a story that takes place before the main narrative, this time of Heracles (8.362–369), though the setting is not the battlefield.

It appears that epic decorum, reflecting at some remove gender relations in ancient Greek society, keeps goddesses largely away from the specific engagements of men in battle, and renders their rare interventions less significant for the overall plot, and indeed less dramatic. Thus while Homeric goddesses are fully capable of shedding the kind of protective mist that Poseidon provides for Aeneas and the Molione (as Athena does for Odysseus repeatedly in the Odyssey: 7.40–42, 13.190, 23.371–372), the only use of this “special effect” by a goddess in the Iliad occurs when Aphrodite cloaks Paris as she spirits him away from Menelaus (3.380–381). Also tellingly, Aphrodite is the one goddess who actually engages in battle, as opposed to merely redirecting missiles, and she proves entirely unequal the task, being sent scurrying back to Olympos with a wounded hand when she takes on the Athena-backed Diomedes (5.311–351). The pre-

27 Thus for example Hainsworth 1993, 273 on Il. 11.437–438.
28 Also off the battlefield, Athena prevents Agamemnon’s death at Achilles’ hands in Book 1 (194–218), though her appearance here is best viewed as a classic example of “double motivation” – she is less as a god than a dramatization of Achilles’ internal decision to restrain himself (see Lesky 1961).
29 Diomedes’ defeat of Aphrodite in Iliad 5 does serve as a link to the larger Trojan War tradition, for “according to Mimnermus, because Aphrodite had been
vailing tendency to separate potential female divine rescuers from the heroes is well illustrated by the rescue of Achilles from the rivergod Xanthos, for which Hera dispatches Hephaestus (21.284–382), with which may be contrasted her dispatch of Athena to intervene in a scene that takes place off the battlefield (2.155–183). A similar picture emerges in the *Odyssey*, where Hera is credited with saving Agamemnon (4.513) and Jason (12.69–72), and Athena with saving Odysseus (5.436–437), not from the hazards of the battlefield, but rather from the non-heroic death of drowning.30

Attitudes about proper female roles may not, however, be all that is at work in the gendering of divine rescues. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the way in which mortal female characters, in particular Penelope in the *Odyssey*, appear to serve as foci for intertextual allusions.31 Because their roles are less defined than those of males, female figures can be deployed in Homeric epic to create “intertextual windows” that point to traditions external to the texts in which they appear.32 In the case of immortal female figures, Laura Slatkin’s classic study of Thetis argues that one of the main functions of that goddess in the *Iliad* is to establish the poem’s relationship to non-Homeric traditions.33 Extending this perspective to other goddesses, it may be that a similar association with intertextuality problematizes their deployment as divine rescuers. That is, while divine rescue usually, as discussed, generates allusions in a manner that harmonizes the *Iliad* with extra-Iliadic traditions, such as the survival of Aeneas or Nestor, allusions that are raised by female figures, by contrast, tend to point to traditions that conflict with the Homeric narrative. Such considerations seem to inform the Iliadic conception of Thetis, whose associations with the pre-Olympian order complicate Zeus’ role as author of the Iliadic plot, as well as Persephone’s role in the *Odyssey* of mediating Odys-
seus’ encounters with deceased heroes and heroines. By this reasoning, a prominent and effective role for, say, Aphrodite, as a divine rescuer would have the potential to raise complicated issues about that goddess’s relationship with Zeus that are prominent in narratives such as her Homeric Hymn, but that her near-comic behavior in the Iliad seems designed to obviate. Thus the Iliad may specifically avoid the use of goddesses as divine rescuers because of a tendency in the ancient Greek epic tradition to associate female figures with traditions that complicate, rather than complement, the Iliad’s relationship with the larger Trojan War story. As a consequence, in the few instances where goddesses are deployed as rescuers on the battlefield, they are denied the use of such iconic effects as cloaking mist, are represented as inept, or act on behalf of figures with whom their association is so well established that specific allusion to an extra-Iliadic tradition is precluded, as is the case with Athena and Odysseus or with Aphrodite and Aeneas.

At the same time, the limitations that the Iliad imposes on the power of goddesses can be seen as a reflection of a need to limit the power of the gods generally within the narrative, for, as Hera observes (16.445–449), the battles could be rendered meaningless if the gods were to exercise free reign in protecting their favorites.34 This need to limit divine power seems to motivate in part a set of scenes in which a god explicitly fails to save a hero. A paradigmatic example of this theme of “failed rescue” occurs in the battle around the Greek ships in Iliad 13, when Ares is prevented from helping his son Ascalaphus withstand the Trojan Deiphobus (13.518–525). Ares’ failure here is both significant within the narrative, drawing as it does attention to the way in which the Olympian hierarchy itself delimits divine prerogatives, and is also reminiscent of successful divine rescues by reason of its apparent engagement with non-Homeric traditions. The Catalog of Ships introduces Ascalaphus as a typical epichoric hero: he and his brother, leaders of the Orchomenian contingent, are the sons of the mortal queen of the Minyans and the god Ares (2.511–515; cf. Pausanias 9.37.7). This special relationship receives emphasis when Ares proves unable to aid his son because the god is “hemmed in by the plans of Zeus” (13.524), and Ascalaphus’ death is then later cited by Hera as an example of the harsh reality that any of the gods may face when Zeus’ plan calls for the loss of their children on the battlefield (15.110–112), a statement that goads Ares into momentarily declaring his willingness to challenge Zeus (115–142). Full appreciation of the significance of the Minyan hero’s

34 James 1996 discusses how the limitations placed on the Iliadic gods contribute to the exaltation of the heroes.
death, then, arises from connections among at least three Iliadic passages – the Catalog entry in Book 2, which establishes Ascalaphus’ special relationship with the god, the hero’s death in Book 13, in which his patron god must bow to Zeus, and the reference by Hera to the death in Book 15 that again dramatizes Zeus’ power.

Like most of the beneficiaries of successful rescues, Ascalaphus is an established figure in non-Homeric traditions: identified in some accounts as an Argonaut and suitor of Helen ([Apollodorus] Library 1.9.16, 3.10.8), he, at least according to Dictys Cretensis (4.2), survives the battlefield at Troy long enough to face the Amazon Penthesilea when she comes to aid the Trojans after Hector’s death. Ares’ failed rescue thus resembles in most respects the successful ones discussed above. The hero Ascalaphus has a special relationship with a god, namely his father Ares, who is prepared to step in and preserve him, and he plays a significant role later in the larger Trojan War narrative. The Iliad, however, appears to challenge some facets of Ascalaphus’ larger identity even as it reifies others. The connection with Ares receives emphasis, but any countervailing traditions involving further adventures of Ascalaphus, such as those that may have served as the basis for Dictys’ late account, are denied Panhellenic authority when the hero is killed off in the Iliad. It is in other words possible that here a divine rescue is deployed in inverted form, as a failed rescue, precisely in order to challenge an epichoric tradition, even as the typical divine rescue can be deployed to reinforce such a tradition. Put another way, the Iliad seems to wall itself off from reciprocal links that could connect the

35 In keeping with the larger theme of my argument, I note that inter- and intratextuality could, depending on the audience, extend further, since Ascalaphus’ death has resonance as well with such scenes as Zeus’ hostile treatment of Ares in Il. 5.864–898. On the μῆνις of Ares in these contexts, see Muellner 1996, 11–14.
37 I would therefore recast Janko’s assessment that “since later sources say Askalaphos did not die at Troy, Homer has innovated to stress his cardinal theme of the gulf between mortals and gods” ([1992] 108 on Il. 13.478–480) in non-biographical terms: the “innovation” can be understood as an adaptive response by the Iliad to an epichoric tradition that, for whatever reason, was deemed inconsistent with the poem’s Panhellenic orientation.
38 The description by Björneborn and Ingwersen 2004, 1219 of how reciprocal linking of websites may reflect on the relative popularity of the sites suggests a comparison with Homeric and non-Homeric traditions: the degree of reciprocity— that is, of intertextual allusion— can serve as one measure of Panhellenic status; explicit rejection of such allusions, by extension, would seem to require some spe-
Homeric account to traditions or versions that give Ares’ son Ascalaphus a significant role among the Minyans, so that it is worth at least considering the possibility of alternative accounts of the Trojan War that embraced a strand of Minyan tradition that the canonical *Iliad* forcefully denies.

Such failed rescue scenes are generally rare. The theme is suggested by an extended commentary on the death of the Trojan Ilioneus at *Iliad* 14.489–505, which the Homeric narrator opens with the observation that the fallen hero was the son of the Trojan closest to Hermes and a beneficiary of the god’s largesse (491). While some commentators have judged Ilioneus and his father to be Iliadic inventions, Virgil at least knew a version of the Trojan War story in which the hero survives, for *maximus Ilioneus* is a ship commander in the *Aeneid* (1.120) who is charged with the significant task of introducing the Trojans to their future allies Dido (1.521–560) and Latinus (7.212–248); he also comforts Euryalus’ grieving mother (9.501), and helps the Trojans to fend off the attack on their camp (9.569). The Iliadic death of Ilioneus thus may be motivated like that of Ascalaphus: the *Iliad*, for reasons seemingly now irrecoverable, conspicuously refuses reciprocal links to traditions about this hero’s post-war identity by raising the possibility of a divine rescue just before his death.

An inset narrative in the *Odyssey* (4.499–511) points in a similar direction: Poseidon momentarily rescues Oileian Ajax from a storm that he has himself sent against the returning hero, apparently as a favor to Athena; Ajax, however, proceeds to boast that he has survived in spite of the gods rather than because of them (503–504), so Poseidon drowns him. Here

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39 Homeric priests and their families are not simply by definition protected by their patron deities, for which reason I do not classify as failed rescues the deaths of characters whose association with a god is mentioned in passing in order to elicit pathos; see Janko 1992, 128 on *Il*. 13.663–670 and 390 on *Il*. 16.603–7. Kirk 1990, 59 on *Il*. 5.53–54 describes the failure of gods to protect their favorites as “a common Iliadic motif”, presumably in reference mainly to scenes not relevant here, such as the one on which he is commenting, in which both Artemis and the archery she taught her protégé Scamandrius are described as unable to defend the otherwise unknown hero against Menelaus (5.49–58); here, as Kirk observes, the mention of Artemis seems intended merely to dramatize the hero’s skill with the bow.


41 Interestingly, Ajax is in the *Iliad* at one point able to see through Poseidon’s disguise, when the god takes the form of Calchas to rally the Greeks (13.66–75), a fact that seems to resonate with his failure to recognize Poseidon’s rescue in the *Odyssey* passage, since most mortal characters normally cannot detect a disguised deity; though cf. Janko 1992, 52 on *Il*. 13.72.
Poseidon’s actions can be seen to reinforce Zeus’ programmatic statement about divine justice with which the main narrative of the *Odyssey* begins (1.32–43): Ajax like Aegisthus perishes owing to his unwillingness to recognize a divine imperative (as do the suitors and Odysseus’ crew). Moreover, Ajax’s behavior in the Odyssean inset narrative is consistent with his argumentative and arrogant behavior in the *Iliad* (e.g., 23.473–498). The appearance of a god to save a hero, followed by the god’s immediate punishment of that hero for his arrogance, creates a memorable vignette that serves as a multi-layered foil for the main hero Odysseus. As the *Odyssey* proceeds, Athena rescues Odysseus from Poseidon (5.436, discussed above), an exact inverse of the situation with Ajax, while Odysseus’ reverential behavior toward the gods after his rescue (5.445–450, 459–462) is the opposite of Ajax’ boastful speech. As in the case with the failed rescue of Ascalaphus in the *Iliad*, then, the abortive rescue of Ajax in the *Odyssey* alludes to other events internal and external to the narrative, and connects the Panhellenic epic with epichoric and would-be Panhellenic epics – in this case with Nostoi traditions about the returning Greeks.

By analyzing Iliadic divine rescue scenes synoptically, I hope to have demonstrated that this theme is not simply a piece of ornamentation to be hauled out when a performing poet was feeling expansive. Rather, the rescue of a hero by a god in the *Iliad* links him to a context that transcends the scene in which the rescue occurs, and in most cases transcends the narrative confines of the *Iliad* itself. The referentiality of such scenes proceeds along multiple paths. To begin with, the very association of hero and god appears often to have been conditioned by epichoric traditions, as is the case with Nestor’s family and Poseidon. Further, since gods in most cases rescue heroes with whom they have a special relationship, allusion can be retrospective; to return to a paradigmatic example, Aphrodite’s rescue of Paris from Menelaus alludes to the Judgment of Paris and the beginning of the Trojan War. On the other hand, allusion is often prospective, since the rescued heroes nearly always play a role in events after they have been saved. Paris must survive his duel with Menelaus in Book 3 not only in order to appear in further scenes in the *Iliad*, but also in order to kill Achilles, and himself be killed by Philoctetes, later in the synthetic Trojan War narrative after the end of the *Iliad*.

Here again the hermeneutic of hypertext can be helpful in appreciating the significance of divine rescue. I have suggested that the traditional referentiality latent in a hero’s identity can be highlighted and activated by linking of his character with that of a god. The consistency of the logic that associates god and hero in this manner suggests that divine rescue
is part of a sophisticated system that helped to manage and present information during the composition-in-performance of an epic poem.\textsuperscript{42} A crucial aspect of this system would have been its dependence on, and responsiveness to, the audiences for whom the poems were performed. The participation of poems such as the \textit{Iliad} in the synthetic Trojan War narrative attests to the power of audiences to shape their own experience of the poems by willfully juxtaposing the Homeric, Panhellenic identities of heroes with their own lifelong experience of local and regional songs and stories about the mythical conflict.\textsuperscript{43} The experience of a hypertextualized \textit{Iliad} may in this respect be closer to that of the original performance context than the experience of a printed text.\textsuperscript{44}

This perspective may at the same time offer a glimpse in the other direction, toward the performing poets. The bold use of Poseidon as the god who rescues Aeneas in the paradigmatic \textit{Iliad} 20 scene provides an example. As discussed above, the choice to deploy a divine antagonist here is only remarkable because the typical rescuer is a divine patron, and it is indeed easy to imagine a version of the story in which the Trojan champion Apollo rather than Poseidon serves as the defender of and mouthpiece for Aeneas’ destiny beyond the \textit{Iliad}. If so, our \textit{Iliad} may preserve in this scene an example of “versioning,” of storing a piece of information – in this case, the link between the Iliadic and post Iliadic Aeneas – in the interest of laying claim to the passage.\textsuperscript{45} By working counter to the expectation created by the typical pattern of the divine rescue theme, in which a hero is rescued by a patron, a composer-performer may have made a memorable contribution to the telling of this passage in what we know as \textit{Iliad} 20 that won the ultimate honor within the context of the tradition: Poseidon became the Homeric voice for Aeneas’ destiny.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Landow 2006\textsuperscript{3}, 153: “Hypermedia as a medium conveys the strong impression that its links signify coherent, purposeful, and above all useful relationships” [emphasis in original].

\textsuperscript{43} Again, cf. the observations of Landow 2006\textsuperscript{3}, 58: “All hypertext systems permit the individual reader to choose his or her own center of investigation and experience. What this principle means in practice is that the reader is not locked into any kind of particular organization or hierarchy”. From this perspective, the \textit{Iliad}’s Panhellenic program of appealing to epichoric traditions carries with it the potential to embed challenges to its own authority, a fact that may motivate for instance the failed rescue scenes discussed above.

\textsuperscript{44} See for instance Bakker 2001, 154–158.

\textsuperscript{45} For “versioning,” see Tsagalis pp. 341–344 in this volume.
Hephaestus’ intercession on behalf of the Trojan Idaeus (*Iliad* 5.9–24), mentioned above as an apparent exception to the proposed model for the deployment of divine rescue, may also be explained in these terms. As discussed, the fact that Idaeus’ father Dares is named as a priest of Hephaestus motivates the otherwise pro-Greek god to save the Trojan hero, who differs from typical Iliadic cannon fodder in receiving a family and backstory. Hephaestus’ action here is however unique in that Idaeus alone among the beneficiaries of divine rescue in the *Iliad* has no known identity outside his rescue scene. A possible explanation for the apparently gratuitous nature of this rescue is that it represents something like a broken hyperlink. That is, a tradition involving Idaeus may be provisionally inferred, a tradition that has with the passage of time become lost so that, in the parlance of a common hypertext error message, “the file cannot be found”.46 A rescue scene is of course in itself insufficient to prove the existence of such a tradition, for which there remain not even the brief references that establish the extra-Homeric identities of heroes like Ascalaphus. Nevertheless, the episode does suggest a possible history for the interactions between Iliadic tradition and non-Homeric traditions in which Dares and his family played a significant role.47 To begin with, the manner in which the *Iliad* introduces Idaeus, “there was among the Trojans a certain Dares, wealthy and blameless, a priest of Hephaestus who had two sons” (5.9–10), is suggestive of such connections. The formulaic ἔνδοταν δῶ τι «, “there was a certain …,” repeatedly introduces a figure in connection with his father, as in the case of a “a certain Euchenor, son of the prophet Polyidus, wealthy and good, living in Corinth” (13.663–664).48 Polyidus like Dares is wealthy and enjoys a special relationship with the gods, though here sufficient detail is provided about him and his son to make clear a

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46 Mary Ebbot in her contribution to this volume uses this analogy in describing the deployment of Theban traditions in the *Iliad*. In the terminology developed by Tsagalis 2008, 63–90, our incomplete knowledge of early Greek epic may have in effect generated a “fissure” in our text of *Iliad* 5, so that Idaeus remains as the only evidence for a scene in which this character played a significant role, either in another *Iliad* or in one of the lost or fragmentary Trojan War epics (cf. 153 on the use of intertexts to elucidate “unintelligible Homeric attestations of a given expression”). The rescue of Poulydamas, discussed above, about whom it can only be said that he seems to survive the war, may represent a similar fissure.

47 I am indebted to Christos Tsagalis for the analysis of Idaeus’ possible significance.

48 Fenik 1968, 12–14 discusses typical elements in Idaeus’ death scene. Louden 2006, 25 argues that such parallels reveal Idaeus’ rescue to be an “anticipatory echo” of Poseidon’s rescue of Aeneas in Book 20.
connection to epichoric traditions. Secondly, there is the curious coincidence that the Iliadic Dares was credited by a later tradition as the Greek source for an Imperial Latin summary of the Trojan War known as the *De Excidio Troiae* or more properly *Acta Diurna Belli Troiani*. While this text makes no mention of Dares’ sons, the very fact that this figure was selected to serve as the mouthpiece of a Trojan War tradition that at times diverges markedly from the Homeric account at least suggests a larger identity for himself and his family than the *Iliad*. Lastly, there is Idaeus’ name, elsewhere a cult title of Zeus (*Iliad* 16.605) associated with mountains near Troy and on Crete.

All of this raises the possibility that Idaeus’ rescue is motivated in part by a web of links to non-canonical traditions identified with his father Dares, and to Hephaestus and Zeus, whose mythologies overlap in the dwarfish wizards known as the ἰδαῖοι Δάκτυλοι (Idaean Dactyls), iron workers identified with Hephaestus (*Phoronis* fr. 2.5 Bernabé; cf. Hesiod fr. 282 Merkelbach-West) and with the Couretes who guard the infant Zeus (Pausanias 5.7.6; cf. 8.31.3). The *Iliad* has Diomedes take the life of Dares’ Greek-named son Phegeus (5.15–19), but sends in a god with whom the family has established connections in order, perhaps, to leave the ostensible future chronicler Dares another son, and to acknowledge a tradition in which this son or a namesake is a supernatural figure associated with the gods Hephaestus and Zeus. Such reconstructions are naturally as speculative as they are vague, but they can serve as thought experiments that can help to recover, if not the specifics of the interactions among Panhellenic and epichoric traditions, at least the tenor and scope of those interactions.

I hope to have demonstrated that life or death on the Iliadic battlefield depends in part on factors that are external to the battlefield scenes themselves. In addition to the demands of sense and drama, the larger identity of many Iliadic characters, major and minor, protects them from all foes.

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49 Janko 1992, 128 on *Il*. 13.663–670 cites Pindar’s *Olympian* 13.75 (dedicated to a Corinthian) and Pausanias 1.43.5 (describing sacred sites in Megara associated with Polyidus and Euchenor) among numerous other sources that establish an independent, non-Homeric identity for these Iliadic characters. The ἐν δὲ τίς formula introduces the Trojan Dolon along with his father (10.314–315), a figure whose story is considered extra-Homeric in origin by even many Unitarians, e.g. West 2001, 10–11; for a defense of the ‘Homericity’ of the Doloneia, see pp. 282–283 in Casey Dué’s contribution to this volume.

50 On Dares’ text, see Merkle 1996, 572–580.

When a character so protected is threatened, a divine rescue draws attention to the hero’s larger identity, both in terms of his pre-existing relationships with the gods and in terms of his destiny within the synthetic Trojan War narrative. The gods thus help to maintain the coherence of the Panhellenic “borderless text” of the war, even as they supply the motivation for most of the major plot developments within a given narrative. The divine rescue theme, like so many other aspects of ancient epic, such as noun-epithet formulas and similes, is therefore revealed as part of the elegant economy of ancient oral narratives, rather than a reflection of primitive religious or poetic sensibilities. The epic gods do not intervene in human battles lightly; they are deployed purposefully and with a subtlety that demands careful attention from the modern reader, who must resist the impulse to follow a recent adaptation of the Trojan War story for the screen and dismiss them from the main story as a distraction. The transformation of print texts into hypertexts is helping to bring modern Homeric audiences into close contact with the traditions in which the ancient poets and their audiences were immersed, and through which they interpreted the only apparently capricious gods of epic.